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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 4277
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1114
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RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0535
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4656
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 9221
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 000524

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

All media lead with the attack, in which eight teenage students were killed and the 11 others wounded, last night at the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva in West Jerusalem's Kiryat Moshe neighborhood. The gunman, an Israeli citizen and East Jerusalem resident from the Jebel

Mukaber neighborhood, gained entrance to the facility and opened fire in the library. The attacker was killed by an IDF soldier who was nearby and the identity of those behind the assault is not yet clear. The Mercaz Harav rabbinic college, the flagship of national-religious yeshivas, is credited with founding the religious settlement movement in the West Bank.

Ha'aretz quoted PM Ehud Olmert as saying that the attack shows that the PA does not sufficiently combat terrorism. Israel Radio quoted left-wing politicians as saying that Israel should not have a "gut response." Right-wing politicians were quoted as saying that Israel should break off negotiations with the PA. Israel Radio reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas condemned the assault. However, the radio quoted Abbas spokesman Nabil Amr as saying on Al Arabiya-TV that Israel is responsible for what happened because it ignores chances for peace. Fawzi Barhoum, a Hamas spokesman in Gaza, was quoted as saying that the attack was the "natural consequence" of Israel's military actions. Leading media reported that thousands of Gazans celebrated last night's attack.

Israel Radio reported that in a phone call to PM Olmert, President Bush condemned the attack and extended his "deepest condolences to the victims, their families, and to the people of Israel." The radio reported that Libya's Ambassador to the UN insisted on censuring Israeli actions in Gaza, thus preventing UN Security Council condemnation of the attack. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Zalmay Khalilzad had introduced a draft statement based on a declaration by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Danny Gillerman, as saying that this is what happens when "terrorists" sit on the council. In another development, The Jerusalem Post reported that the UN Human Rights Council, in a resolution sponsored by Pakistan and other Muslim countries, has condemned Israel's military action in Gaza as "collective punishment." The Jerusalem Post also reported that on Thursday Israel rejected claims by eight British groups that the situation was worse than it had ever been since 1967 and that Israel was responsible for it. The Foreign Ministry placed responsibility for the state of affairs squarely at Hamas's doorstep.

Yated Ne'eman reported that, due to the security situation, Defense Minister Ehud Barak canceled his visit to the U.S., which was planned for next week.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that Hamas and Islamic Jihad representatives met with Egyptian intelligence officials in the Egyptian city of El-Arish on Thursday to discuss the Rafah border crossing and a possible truce with Israel. After the meeting, Ayman Taha, Hamas's spokesman in Gaza, said that Hamas was open to a tahdiya -- a temporary cease-fire -- on the condition that it be observed by both sides and include the lifting of the Gaza blockade. Khader Habib, who headed the Islamic Jihad delegation at the meeting, was quoted as saying that Israel must also agree to a comprehensive cease-fire in the West Bank that includes an end to arrests of suspected militants. The Jerusalem Post quoted Taha as saying that Hamas is open to having members of the PA's presidential guard stationed at the Rafah border crossing, as long as Hamas be allowed to vet the list of personnel. Taha added that the organization would also agree to the redeployment of European observers at the border as long as they lived in the Strip or in Egypt and not in Israel. The Jerusalem Post and other media also reported that on Thursday Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman met with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch. Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that on Thursday senior IDF officers met with their counterparts in the Palestinian preventative forces in the West Bank to discuss ways to maintain calm in the territories following Friday prayers.

The Jerusalem Post cited figures published by the GOI's Central Bureau of Statistics showing that new construction by Jews in the West Bank has dropped more quickly than Israel's population as a whole.

Over the past few days media reported that Philippine authorities have arrested three suspected Middle Eastern militants for involvement in a plot to bomb the embassies of the U.S., Israel, the UK, and Australia in Manila.

Maariv told parallel stories of two families: one from Sderot, the

other from Gaza.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post, renowned American Mideast scholar Prof. Bernard Lewis compared the "monstrous perversion of Islam" to the evils of Nazism and Bolshevism and was quoted as saying that where it leads will depend on how the West responds to it.

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Weizmann Institute of Science's Prof. Ada Yonath is one of five women researchers in the world to win the L'Oreal-UNESCO'S 2008 Women in Science Award, each worth \$100,000. Yonath is one of the world's leading structural biologists.

Yediot quoted American actor Tom Hanks as saying that he is interesting in producing his next movie in Israel.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "[Israel] is ... incapable ... of firing back at those that fire rockets at its civilians. This is the 'asymmetrical' clash, in which the hands of one side are tied, while the hands of the other side are soaked in blood."

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The efforts by both Jerusalem and Washington to renew the negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, interrupted by the fighting in Gaza, will now be officially put on hold, and picking up the pieces in the wake of this outrage will not be easy."

Religious-Zionist columnist Uri Orbach wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "The Mercaz Harav Yeshiva and the religious-Zionists feel that they are again paying the price of a policy that is not tough enough."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "It is quite possible that Rice has simply isolated herself from all information that might force her to change her policy course."

The conservative, Russian-language Novosty Nedely wrote: "Never has Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice received such a cold welcome in

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Israel as during her visit this week."

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in Maariv): "A Palestinian state is an Israeli interest -- and a Palestinian one, of course. However, many Palestinians think otherwise."

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The reestablishment of a Palestinian unity government will create a single Palestinian address vis-a-vis which it will be possible at least to conduct the conflict, if there is no way at the moment of achieving a solution."

Block Quotes:

I. "With Hands Tied"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/7): "Exactly 33 years separate the terror attack yesterday at the Mercaz Harav Yeshiva in Jerusalem and the terror attack at the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv. Then it was Abu Jihad's men, who wished to avenge Operation Spring Youth in Beirut.... The terror attack at the Savoy took place after the Yom Kippur War, which was the last big war effort by the Arab countries to defeat Israel. Since then, for 35 years already, this option has been blocked. The Arabs understood that they would not rout Israel in a war. They turned to the path of terror. The high priest of the terrorist effort is, of course, Iran, which operates its forward

units in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. The method: psychological warfare; constant undermining of the feeling of personal security; physical harm by means of rockets and isolated terrorists; taking advantage of the weaknesses and fears of the other side; and chiefly the fact that there is a western, relatively liberal society here, sensitive to human life on both sides; and transparent to the media.

Israel cannot respond to a terror attack with a terror attack. It is also incapable, even, of firing back at those that fire rockets at its civilians. This is the 'asymmetrical' clash, in which the hands of one side are tied, while the hands of the other side are soaked in blood."

II. "An Assault at the Heart of Zionism"

Columnist Calev Ben-David wrote on page one of the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (3/7): "Rarely have terrorists chosen their target with so much malicious care as in Thursday night's attack on Jerusalem's Mercaz Harav Yeshiva. In striking the flagship institution of the religious Zionist movement, a Jerusalem landmark whose history is linked with the founding and fulfillment of the Jewish national home in the Land of Israel, the gunman aimed his weapon at the heart of the Zionist enterprise.... The Olmert government, which until now has been able to contain political fallout from the rocket fire on Sderot and Ashkelon in part because of the absence of major attacks elsewhere in the country, will now find its margin of error -- and survival -- dramatically narrowed. The efforts by both Jerusalem and Washington to renew the negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, interrupted by the fighting in Gaza, will now be officially put on hold, and picking up the pieces in the wake of this outrage will not be easy."

III. "From Mourning to Anger"

Religious-Zionist columnist Uri Orbach wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/7): "The Mercaz Harav ... symbolizes the national conception of Zionist religious people. This conception sanctifies the State of Israel and its symbols. Thousands of people outside those circles aren't convinced that this is the right way. The anger that has accumulated since the days of disengagement and [the evacuation of the outpost of] Amona, the sharp feeling that the events in southern Israel will now again seep into the streets of Jerusalem may turn the protest into a really un-national event. Jerusalem is awakening to a new reality. The Mercaz Harav Yeshiva and the religious-Zionists feel that they are again paying the price of a policy that is not tough enough. One could debate this, one could say that it is too early to observe consequences, but the feeling of mourning is blending with anger and pain over young lives cut short."

IV. "Condi's Echo Chamber"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post (3/7): "Some Israelis and supporters of Israel attribute Rice's irrational championing of Palestinian statehood to anti-Israel bigotry.... But there is another possible -- in fact more likely -- explanation for Rice's behavior. It is quite possible that Rice has simply isolated herself from all information that might force her to change her policy course.... With only 10 months left in office, unless Bush swiftly forces Rice to change course, these and other policies pushed by Rice in spite of their obvious failures will either blow up in her face, or in the face of her successor. And of course, it isn't only her legacy that will be harmed by her irresponsible insulation. The lives of tens of millions of people will be imperiled by her hidebound policies."

V. "'Hot Winter,' Cold Welcome"

The conservative, Russian-language Novosty Nedely wrote (3/6): "Never has Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice received such a cold welcome in Israel as during her visit this week. Israeli-American relations became tense the moment Rice condemned our country for 'killing civilians in Gaza' during the [IDF's] military Operation Hot Winter. The revival of Israeli-Palestinian talks was declared as the main goal of the Secretary of State's visit.... Rice was hoping to convince Abu Mazen to come back to the negotiating table by promising him, according to well-informed sources, that Israel would renew the policy of restraint... and release another group of

Palestinian detainees.... However, during her meeting with Abu Mazen, he declared ... that the talks with Israel will be renewed only in case of a complete cessation of Israeli strikes on Gaza."

VI. "The Strength of Ideology"

Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in Maariv (3/7): "A Palestinian state is an Israeli interest -- and a Palestinian one, of course. However, many Palestinians think otherwise. In fact, they have always done absolutely everything to harm their own interests. In this sense, Hamas is only continuing the opposition to the [1937] Peel Committee and the [1947] Partition Plan for Palestine. The State of Palestine means education, industry, economy, a sewage system, and postal services. A Palestinian state would have responsibility for itself. This is exactly what the Islamic leadership doesn't want.... Israel can deal harsh blows to Syria and its economy. But it finds it hard to strike ideological bodies such as Hamas or Hizbullah that operate from inside residential buildings and kindergartens. This is exactly the reason why there is no regime in Gaza that takes any responsibility -- and why there won't be one."

VII. "Daze of Reckoning in Gaza"

Senior Middle East affairs analyst Zvi Bar'el wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/7): "The reestablishment of a Palestinian unity government will create a single Palestinian address vis-a-vis which it will be possible at least to conduct the conflict, if there is no way at the moment of achieving a solution -- because even now Israel is talking about a 'drawing-board agreement' rather than one that can be implemented. Such a Palestinian unity government, like the one formed last year, would not prevent the continuation of the political dialogue with Abbas, to which Hamas has already agreed in any case, and would not deny him legitimacy as a representative of the entire Palestinian people.

On the other hand, maintaining the split between Hamas and the PA will leave a permanent conflagration raging on the Palestinian front. Hamas will continue to use violent means, not only to respond to Israeli actions, but also to try to continue to force Fatah and Abbas to turn back the wheel -- in other words, to restore to Hamas the political achievements it attained in the elections."

JONES